

Elizabeth L. Ellis

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 3-30-07
SB 452

30 March, 2007

My name is Betsey Ellis. I live in the Swan Valley 9 miles north of Condon. I am here to ask for your support for Senate Bill 452. This bill would create "The Montana Working Forests, Ranches, Farms and Watersheds Act." Montana has been discovered which means population increases which leads to pressure to turn ranches, farms, timberland into malls and subdivisions. This bill would help those willing farmers, ranchers, timberland owners and advocates for watersheds to protect and conserve their lands permanently.

My husband, Steve, and I grew up in East Tennessee in the foothills of the Smokey Mountains. It too is a beautiful place, or used to be. Now the meadows, forests, and small family farms are vanishing. They are being replaced by countless subdivisions. The land is fractured and fragmented. It is like a gigantic monster is gobbling up the woods, meadows, polluting the streams, and degradating the land.

Senate Bill 452 would provide a way for willing ranchers, farmers, timberland owners to keep their land in production as working farms, working forests, as well as protect vital habitat and wildlife corridors. It is expensive to conserve the land. This bill would provide a funding source for the necessary and critical project costs such as baseline studies, title reports, preparation of special maps, real estate appraisals, land surveys and geologists' reports which are necessary when placing a conversation easement on the land.

It would be a travesty if Montana's world-class scenery, wildlife, water quality, recreation and economy disappear because we weren't farsighted enough to protect and preserve the traditional western land use activities Montanans have pursued since frontier days.

Thank you,

Betsey Ellis

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